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Spiritual Development

For twenty years we have been talking and writing more than ever about spiritual development. But the question still remains, what does it mean to grow spiritually? One way to respond is by focussing on three experiences we all undergo in the spiritual life; *centering, decentering, recentering.*

To *center* is to find in prayer or meditation the spiritual self we have always wanted to be: the compassionate, more ethical self that is wise and ageless compared to the ego-driven personality competition shapes. The founder of analytic psychology, C. G. Jung, saw this "undiscovered self" in every patient he ever treated: the person "made in the image of God," un-made in everyday life.

To know and become this self-of-the-depths we must descend in prayer or meditation through the infinite "passage" that leads to the roots of our human existence, the core of our deepest reality. Only here at these hidden depths can we meet the whole self we are meant to become, the self capable of knowing God. The religious way may take the form of bright days or dark nights, simple joys or hard suffering, but no other way leads to God. No other way leads to freedom, intelligence, and love.

The alternative is egocentricity. To remain ego-centered is like hiding in a tight little room with closed curtains obstructing the flow of life and light and the feeling of spaciousness that comes from enjoying God's green and shining world. Locked up behind four defensive walls, unwilling to see the critical difference between half-a-life and "the abundant life," egotistical people choose fate over freedom and unreality over the spirit's longing for truth.

We all come into the world ego-centered and grow up denying piece after piece of our genuine self. Born with a full set of feelings meant to be felt, we often refuse to feel; endowed with the lawyer's gift for reasoning, we often fail to reason. Unique human gifts lie dormant in each of us when egoic pride or fear prevent access to the full self. How do we overcome this natural plight? How do we re-collect and integrate the lost parts of ourselves?

I know of no easy way. Only one door leads out of the egocentric predicament. Prayer—only prayer—can ready us day by day to step out of our ego's "safe" little room and confront the real self-in-God. Thomas Merton noted throughout his writings that it is the purpose of life to seek the transcendent self united with God. "God is the Center toward which all things tend," he wrote, but experience of the Divine presupposes knowledge of the self.

Once *centered*, we may think because we are feeling alive and well that nothing can lock us into our ego again or throw us off course or fill our minds with irrelevant ideas. We may resolve to direct our total attention to God, to concentrate all our energies on God's purposes like a poet lost in his poem, a weaver lost in her weaving. But nothing is permanent, and the centered state, like a flower, can wither overnight.

Perhaps a natural event like illness or a radical upheaval like job loss or death or divorce cuts a big slice out of our identity and we give up our prayer or meditation practice. When prayer goes, a balance breaks. We *decenter*, we disconnect from the spiritual self—and therefore from God—to clench in on our ego once more, constricted and limited. Back in that cramped little room our activities feel as purposeless as planting dead seeds. It becomes almost impossible to believe the promise that *decentering* processes end in *recentering*. Yet that is exactly what happens.

From one day to the next, we can reawaken to God's eternal lure and whisper a simple "yes." Yes, I consent, accept the pain, will make the sacrifice: Whatever it takes to return to You.

As we *recenter*, turn back on the "path of no coming and no going" toward the self that images God, prayer will hold us as long as we persevere. "Unless you meditate constantly," Zen master Gasan wrote, "your light will go out"; "Pray always," said St. Paul. First-hand experience of extinguished light will make us more careful this time of the gift received, more wary of *decentering*.

Nevertheless, for all our firm efforts and sincere resolve, spiritual development is a series of recurring cycles, and the strongest human will is powerless over the pattern of *decentering* and *recentering*—the endless loss and recovery, dying and rising again. To grow spiritually is to circle upward and slide downward repeatedly. But with each new cycle, we climb a little higher than we fell, for despite the disheartening reversals, spiritual progress inches its way toward the spiral's top. We advance. The years go by and we sense the road ascend. Eventually a day arrives when we stand supportless and still at an existential threshold leading into the Emptiness, into the Being of God. With a great leap of self-forgetfulness, a move beyond and out of the rediscovered self, we pass entirely into the Invisible, where our small existence coalesces with God's like a snowflake in blazing flames. This "great death," the saints and mystics and scriptures say, initiates an experience of God that never ends.

The material in this edition of *Fellowship In Prayer* presents this understanding of spiritual development interpreted by authors religiously formed in a wide variety of traditions.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky
Editor

Love is our inclination, strength, and power in making our way to God, for love unites us with God. The more love we have, the more deeply we enter into God and center ourselves in God.

John of the Cross

There is a part of each of us which is already luminous, already converted. And there is a part which is still in shadow. A community is not made up of only the converted. It is made up of all the elements in us which need to be transformed, purified, and pruned. It is made up also of the untransformed.

Jean Vanier

Our prayers are answered not when we are given what we ask but when we are challenged to be what we can be.

Rabbi Morris Adler

What we call the beginning is often the end,
And to make an end is to make a beginning,
The end is where we start from.

T. S. Eliot

Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.

Martin Luther King

Consider your essence as light rays rising from center to center.
So rises livingness in you.

Buddhist saying

For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8. 38-39

You should carefully observe the way toward which your heart draws you, then choose this way with all your strength.

Martin Buber

Feel the consciousness of each person as your own consciousness. Thus leaving aside concern for self, become each being.

Zen saying

The Divine Ordination of Women

MIRIAM THERESE WINTER

This beautiful article, in lyrical language born of deep religious experience, shows that spiritual growth and love are inseparable: each comes forth from and leads to the other in an ever-increasing arc. Spiritually formed as a religious, the author spent an "empowering" summer of service setting up with three other women an intensive feeding station for Ethiopia's famine-struck. As an endless line of starving women "held out their babies, thin little things" in a silent plea for food, only prayer and the religious liturgies she celebrated sustained her in a nearly hopeless work.

The flickering candle chants its litany of light into the darkness of the tiny dwelling, declaring the whole of it sacred space. Arising slowly from the ground and from a deep, hard sleep, I pause before my icon to pray. The small square hole cut out of the canvas, my window to another world, holds a silhouette of the Ethiopian bush. How peaceful just before daybreak. Too dark to distinguish the impoverished hordes huddled in the hollows of the hillsides. Too early for the silence to be shattered by the howl of hunger and cacophony of despair. Give us this day our daily bread. Deliver us from evil. How fragile the hope that holds us hostage. Another day. Another long, hot, hard, exhausting, exasperating day. Well, better one day in your tent, O God, O suffering, saving, compassionate God, than a thousand in the security of my own home in Connecticut. It is time to celebrate the liturgy for which I was ordained. I pull on my jeans and my thick-soled shoes. God, I believe, help my unbelief. Let all that I do praise you.

It is just after dawn and already the long, brown, deathly silent line snakes all around the perimeter of our camp and loses itself in the distance. People. Lined up for food, for work, for a handout of any kind. I don't work the camp, so it's not my job to sort out, select, and send them away. Oh, some will get work and grain for their family. Several hundred

Miriam Therese Winter has an international reputation for 13 albums of religious songs she has written and recorded. Best known for "Mass of a Pilgrim People," which was premiered at Carnegie Hall, she has also written widely praised books like Preparing the Way of the Lord *and* God-With-Us. *She teaches spirituality and worship at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.*

perhaps. But there must be a thousand already waiting and hundreds more on the way. I drink a cup of hot tea and eat something "nourishing." A famine biscuit with a peanut butter spread. It hardly matters. It is an effort to swallow, seeing all those hungry people. I turn to avoid their eyes. As I move out into and through the crowds, lines part and children rush to join me in procession. Together we head toward the intensive feeding center about a mile away, reenacting the rite with the precision of routine: down to the river, across the bridge, up the long slow hill, hot now in the morning sun, through elephant grass and the red clay schoolyard to the tiny compound where I will spend all my energies again in rituals of hope and healing. A woman chanting a Muslim prayer throws herself at my feet, and another, pleading, clings to my hand. Women hold out their babies, thin little things, men shove small children into my path. People pull and push, they shout, they cry. Jesus, when you entered Jerusalem, when again and again you encountered a crowd, how did your heart survive? I enter the sanctuary, our place of prayer, to the chant of the *populi Deo*. Their lament is loud and clear. Out of the depths of my pain arises my own *miserere nobis*. Forgive us, O God, our sins of insensitivity and indifference. For caring too little and possessing too much. For wasting our wealth on the trivial, while the world hangs on the cross. The night staff comes forward to make their report. Young, inexperienced Ethiopian villagers, desperate for work, are now our trusted aids and "nurses." It was a fairly quiet night, they say. Several fevers. Some distress. We are low on oil. We are out of sugar. There is no water for the powdered milk. Why can't we use river water? When will grain arrive from Addis? People are hungry. I know, I say. Night shift, go home and get some sleep. Biharu, Sultan, arrange the barrels and pray for rain. Tigiste, go borrow two tins of oil from the Swiss camp up the road. Now let's dish up the 8 a.m. feed, then see to medications and morning rounds. The entrance rite is over. We move on to our liturgy.

Several hundred life stories line the thatch walls and cover the mud floors of the three tiny rooms on the compound. Each life is a proclamation of God's Word, the suffering a preaching more eloquent than any I have ever heard. The broken bodies cradle a hope and a faith that never falters. I can feel the strength all around me. I distribute food and medicines, but when it comes to the intangibles, they give and I receive. This deep, unspoken dialogue gives the message of hope its meaning. All who hunger are fed. As I move slowly around the crowded little room, greet-

ing, touching, responding to need in my awkward, limited way, I am greeted, touched, and nurtured beyond all possible anticipation by the spirit of our incarnate God.

Our intensive feeding center for emaciated children is a temporary refuge. We set it up oursleves, Mary, Carolyn, Maureen, and I. My three colleagues are nurses. I do whatever needs to be done. Daily, every two hours, what serves as bread is figuratively blessed, broken, and distributed under a variety of disguises: soybean porridge or hotcake; high protein biscuits; thick, sweet powdered milk laced with oil and sugar; and once in a while, God be praised, a very, very small banana. Seven times a day, I take, break, distribute, and all around give thanks, as the Author of Life restores to life those physically diminished. Seven times a day, a miracle, when fully present to the Presence, I can see the shape of grace. It is 10 a.m., time once again for me to fulfill my primary daily function, presiding over a liturgy of the eucharist, presiding over the distribution of desperately needed "daily bread." When you see a hungry person and feed that person, you are feeding me, said Jesus. I look out over the beautiful brown faces of my sisters and brothers, broken bodies with unbroken spirits. This is my body, said Jesus. Amen, I say. Amen.

That was two summers ago during my sojourn in Ethiopia, but in the space my heart inhabits, time is liturgical time. An empowering past is present and that liturgical celebration never ends. I am still praying prayers of petition, still searching for reconciliation, still extending greetings of peace to a host of hostile forces, still saying, over and over, words of benediction. That liturgy is not over because it is the liturgy of life and there are lessons yet to learn. I am still learning how to discern the incarnate Word in the dailyness all around me, still learning how to pray the perfect prayer. I am still learning how to be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only.

My associates and I are very much involved in theological education,

> As denominational debates continue about rules, roles, and the proper place of women, women the world over, day after day, celebrate the basic rite of life: feeding, healing, nurturing. Giving birth to life and sustaining life are truly priestly functions to which women have been divinely ordained.

Paul M. Schrock

so we look for the words to make sense of the Word as a pattern for our lives. Friends in their search for a spirituality seek structure and turn inward, as we trade bits and pieces of authentic religious traditions in a mix-and-match approach to holiness. Liturgists evaluate rites and rituals in the hope of preserving a moment in time when the sacred and secular intersect, but as denominational debates continue about rules, roles, and the proper place of women, women the world over, day after day, celebrate the basic rite to life: feeding, healing, nurturing. Giving birth to life and sustaining life are truly priestly functions to which women have been divinely ordained. We spend too much time on rites arising out of our own theories and experience, when catastrophic signs in the wider world tell us to turn our attention toward a more fundamental ritual, which is the liturgy of life. The Word awaiting proclamation has yet to be fully fathomed. The Bread of Life, already broken, must be distributed to all. Already we hear, here and there, the song of the new creation.

Faith moves mountains, transcending creeds.
The Word within words is embodied in deeds.
Fear for the future finds hope in the past,
for love was the first word, it's surely the last.

Mountains and meadows and free-flowing streams,
gardens and ghettoes and poor people's dreams,
down through the ages, the good news is heard:
each of life's pages expresses the Word,
love that engages enfleshes the Word.

The poor will have privilege, the hungry will eat.
All of the homeless will dance in the street.
In God's revelation, real love will release
the reincarnation of justice and peace.

One day the whole earth, our holy earth, will be caught up in a universal dance, a cosmic celebration. One day all people, having learned how to share, will be at ease with giving thanks. At the heart of this cosmic liturgy, of every authentic liturgy, is the God who creates and sustains all people, the God who celebrates daily the liturgy of life.

Our Desire for Space

SHIVA KUMARI

People rushing ahead of others in line have a me-first need for space inappropriate on a spiritual path. If we catch ourselves in this kind of a power struggle, the author suggests, we should pray to "let go and let God."

Spacial relationships are as fundamental as the need for food and air. One can see it in all kingdoms of nature including the human kingdom.

Anyone who has brought home a cute little kitten and thought the adorable animal was expressing affection when it rubbed against your leg, was seriously mistaken. He was scent-marking his territory!

As a breeder of finches, I have watched as the birds in the aviary established their individual territories. I have seen cock fights that could have been to the death had I not walked in the aviary and stopped it. These fights were usually over territory.

This primal need for space can be seen in the human kingdom, only we have found ways to mask it with subtle and often complicated psychological maneuvers.

The next time you are with a group of people, observe how people interact, both verbally and non-verbally, and you will be amazed (once you are aware of it) how much of what they say and do is related to spacial need.

For example, there is usually at least one person who interrupts others in order to dominate the conversation. When someone interrupts, he/she makes the following statements: (1) That what he has to say is more important (in his own mind); (2) That what he has to say is more interesting than listening to what someone else has to say; and (3) That he requires a great deal of space. The person who is in control, be it in a conversational setting or in a hierarchical setting, always has more space than those who are being led or subjugated.

But let us focus on the conversational setting. The one who dominates the conversation has carved out his or her space and established them-

Shiva Kumari, who intensively studied Buddhism and Hinduism for many years, is a Roman Catholic hermit. She breeds and sells finches to support her vocation of contemplative prayer in seclusion.

Paul M. Schrock

selves as the "alpha male" or the "alpha female." Observe next how the others maneuver to find space for themselves.

Some are argumentative. Whatever the Alpha male or female says, the argumentative one will disagree with it.

Others ride on the power of the Alpha by going along with what he has to say.

And others stay out of it altogether. By not vying for attention or authority, there is limitless space which no one can contest.

Recently I was waiting in line at the health food store of Integral Yoga. Two cash registers became free simultaneously. There was only one woman in front of me, so I began to move. She became hostile and said, "I'm first!"

"There are two registers open and only one line," I replied gently.

"But I'm first!" she insisted.

I stepped back and said, "By all means. You be first!"

This seemed to enrage her more than if I'd argued with her. She began saying things which made no sense whatsoever, such as "It isn't a matter of who's first but I'm first!"

"Madam!" I responded, "There's absolutely nothing standing in your way. Go! Be first!"

This enraged her even further. I could see that the people at the cash register were standing and waiting, plus a line of people behind us. In order to avoid holding others up, I simply abandoned the interplay and proceeded to one of the cash registers. The woman then went to the other available register and the line began to move again.

I have placed all this power play and territorial maneuvering on an animal level because that is precisely where it belongs. It does not belong in the spiritual dimension. If one tries to gain space through power and control, then one cannot turn to the Lord and say, "Thy Will be done." God needs space too!

If one has established the habit pattern of "me first" (the one who interrupts others so that he can be the one to speak, for example) then it is impossible to enter into contemplative prayer.

Contemplative prayer is the deepest way in which one can enter into relationship with the Lord. But contemplative prayer is not just silence; it is also listening. If one is unable to listen to others when audible sounds can be heard, then how can one listen to the subtle inaudible sounds of God speaking within?

The reason giving up control (giving up "self") is one of the most difficult aspects of spiritual growth is because that desire for control is a part of the primal survival instinct. Survival of the fittest applies just as much to the animal level of human nature as it does to the animal kingdom itself.

When one speaks of giving up control, there arises a fear from those primal instincts which says, "If you give up control, you will be eaten by predators!" If you look at humanity in general, this is exactly what happens on a psychological level. All too often the weaker are devoured by the stronger. Therefore, when spiritual teachings ask you to give up control—to let go and let God—it is as much as asking the individual to place himself or herself in a situation so vulnerable as to be life threatening. It is for this reason that the ego is so difficult to deal with. Ego is nothing more than that animal survival instinct.

Paul M. Schrock

There comes a point in contemplative prayer (usually after many years of practice) in which one finds oneself upon the brink of a metaphorical abyss. It is a point in which the animal comes face to face with the spiritual and God says, "Choose!" In order to choose the spiritual, one must leap into that abyss and the animal (ego) knows that if you leap, it will surely die.

Anyone who has ever had this experience knows that it is the most terrifying encounter one could possibly have. All the primal instincts from the beginning of time rise up like a huge monster while the angel of God faces him head on. "Choose!"

You may find yourself upon that precipice many times before you find the courage to let go so totally as to make the plunge. But once it happens, it is the most beautiful transition on the spiritual path.

When you leap into that abyss, space opens up and you realize that all the limitations you had previously seen as barriers were nothing more than illusions. You know what it means to be free and to be truly alive.

But when you open your eyes and look once again upon your world of ordinary reality, you see that you are still human. You still have faults that need to be worked on. Nothing has changed in the ordinary world. The only thing that has changed is the window through which you view the world.

How I Learned to Meditate

ROBERT GRANAT

The author always recoiled at invitations to learn about the spiritual life. "I had no desire to go someplace else and become somebody else. I was content to stay right here and be who I was." But suddenly one day he changed his mind and decided to attend a Buddhist/Christian conference where surprising things began to happen.

Like everybody these days, I'd heard about meditation—and never felt drawn to it in the slightest. The word itself didn't sound attractive, or the idea either. Too vague. I saw no point in sitting on my buttocks to contemplate my navel, which I doubted was any wiser than my head. The oriental circus that was touring the occident turned me off, not on, the exotic get-up mystic knowledge came decked out in. Because I had no desire to go someplace else and become somebody else. I was content to stay right here and be who I was. My discontent was simply that I wasn't being it. So how was something so foreign supposed to help me become more native?

One morning, as I was dealing the daily stack of junk mail into the wastebasket, my eye was arrested and my hand stopped: an invitation. An invitation to some conference. A "Conference on Buddhist and Christian Meditation." I keep getting invitations all the time—to join this, to contribute to that, to attend conferences. And I throw them out, with a pang of pity, perhaps, for the slaughtered forest they're printed on. Not this time. This time a light flashed. Inside, outside, I didn't know. Or care. A light that had been dark for a long time suddenly flashed on. It was green. "Go," the light said. I went.

Now, thinking back, I can't explain what happened. I can hardly call it a moment of "miraculous intervention" into my existence, since my existence itself, from the moment I was conceived against those inconceivable odds, strikes me as one ongoing miraculous intervention. But just as there in the fallopian darkness, all conditions had become ripe for me. Perhaps it was the sight of those sturdy adjectives, Christian and Buddhist, splinting up that wobbly noun, meditation. But this is just an

Robert Granat, a well-known author from New Mexico, writes that his subsuming interest lies in the religion of the unchurched, who profess "a non-sectarian faith in the fundamental mystical nature of reality."

afterthought—and after no thought at all. My decision then was utterly thoughtless. Not even a decision, since there was no alternative to choose.

About the conference itself I needn't say much. Three or four hundred other individuals from diverse traditions and situations, at diverse ages and stages, had also been drawn to this spot. It wasn't hard to see what united their diversity: they meant it. Meant it the same way I did, and for the same reason. Meant it as much as I meant it, and, it seemed to me, in most cases more. One thing for certain: they'd all done more about it. They'd all meditated. I was probably the only person here who hadn't.

I watched them sit themselves down on mats and cross their legs and position their hands, and I did what they did. A bell tinkled softly and the whole room froze.

For the next forty minutes there wasn't a sound or a movement. This collective stillness had its effect. Forty minutes of utter silence in a room packed with four hundred breathing bodies inside which lived four hundred human beings who meant it, and something happened. Again, don't ask me what, but something no less actual for my inability to pin a name on it, something palpable and present, here and now. It wasn't The Answer, not The Because to The Why, The Question that had been disturbing my existence so long—and, obviously now, had been disturbing at least four hundred other existences too. It was rather that The Question itself began shrinking and shrivelling. Its size and weight, divided by four hundred, left my personal fraction light and easy to carry. For the first time in my life I felt right at home in a crowd. It wasn't like crossing over a frontier and entering my true country at last. It was rather an irrefutable confirmation that this motherland of my subjectivity was not a private fantasy spawned by my personal maladjustment but a communal dream, archetypical, inherent, the birthright of the race itself. I wasn't its only citizen. This was a convocation of exiles!

Meanwhile, down on more primitive levels, this meditation was beginning to hurt. My body, having no notion what was going on up in its higher centers, and no appreciation of it either, had begun a resentful muttering, which, as the minutes went on without the habitual attention from me, grew steadily louder and angrier, from a mumbling grumbling protest to a howling mutinous outrage. Never in its life had it been subjected to such neglect. Always its calls and complaints had brought a

Cliff Moore

swift and loving response from me. But now, suddenly, inexplicably, it was abandoned, getting nothing. Not a yawn or a cough of acknowledgment, not a shift or scratch of relief, not even a sigh of sympathy.

In the stillness I seemed to see my body in a light I'd never seen it with before, catch the look in its eye, so to speak, as it looked at me. Not looked, glared—the petulant glare of a rather spoiled child toward its doting parent. And no baby anymore either, a big one, almost an adolescent. Up to now I'd regarded my flesh variously and changingly—as my servant and as my master, as my prison and as my escape vehicle, as my archenemy and as my very self.

My body, of course, was sharing none of this insight. All it wanted was my attention and my God it was going to get it.

Back began to ache. Skin surfaces broke out in a smallpox of itches. Hands suspended over belly trembled in righteous indignation. Legs crossed in front of me began an ominous tingling, sent out ever-more-urgent SOS's to shift their position. And when I didn't, when for the first time in our life together I didn't, they sank deeper and deeper into an excruciating sleep into melancholy nightmares of strangulation.

Around me nobody moved a muscle, nobody hawked, scratched, fidg-

eted, beyond an occasional straightening up from a dorsal wilt. If one other soul had broken ranks, given way, stretched, moaned, uncurled, keeled over, I might well have been number two, since my body was now throwing an anything-goes tantrum, since physical pain had brutally taken all the territory of awareness now, was pushing to the very brink of bearability. Never had I willfully subjected my innocent bones, nerves, fibers, arteries, to torture such as this.

And what remained to keep me at it, what held me out against this agony, fought off these heart-rending cries for mercy? Not my spirit, certainly—that had fled the scene. No, it was pride, ego-self pure and simple, just the thing, the obstacle, the impedance, meditation was designed to break down. And it was about to do that, any second now, though hardly in the way prescribed. Ego, pride, was about to crack. Defeat, abject surrender, was immanent. Like all of us save the truly heroic, the truly selfless, I was about to cave in under torture, confess everything, sign anything.

I was saved by the bell. At the ultimate instant the tinkle of brass, broke the silence, the agony and me simultaneously. Four hundred human bodies, mine among them, began to stir. Four hundred human sentiences returned from wherever they'd been.

As I sat there, patting and massaging my poor calves, rotating my poor neck, undulating my poor spinal column, I heard a question rising from our midst toward the meditation master, who sat, still peacefully self-enfolded, up on a low dais.

"But what about the pain, sir? What about this god-awful pain?"

The instructor was a Zen *roshi*, a Japanese not yet fluent enough in our tongue to say much more than what was essential.

"Pain . . . ah yes, pain," he repeated softly—and flashed a sudden smile. A big searchlight smile of fine white teeth accompanied by smaller twin smiles of narrow black eyes that beamed from a round head of smooth skin. Well, he himself had been meditating for over thirty years now, he said, and . . .

"And . . . ?"

"And still hurt. But before, *pain*-ful pain. Now, *wonder*-ful pain. How you say? No pain, no gain?"

Four hundred faces replicated his smile, or tried. An arm went up and the roshi nodded down to it.

"Thirty years of sitting meditation—could you tell us, what good has it done you?"

The roshi's smile underwent a sudden intensification, and again the four hundred faces grew bright. In reflection, like four hundred moons around a sun.

"Next question, please," the roshi said.

"Do you, as a Buddhist, believe in God?" A thin woman with a piercing white look, a religious probably.

"Ah . . ." The roshi's naked noggin began to bob gently. His bushy black eyebrows, the only hair left on it, lifted into two strokes of sumi calligraphy. "Ah yes . . . God . . ." He'd heard this one before.

"I believe in . . . *Something*.

Something. The way he said it, Something was a far more precise word than God.

"Could you please expand on that a little?"

"No."

The beaming warmth played on the nun as she melted back into anonymity.

"Next question, please."

A third question rose from the floor, a question I too might have asked, if I weren't so self-conscious, so new to this kind of situation, this kind of company.

"Sir, I wonder if you could tell us what made you do what you're doing? I mean, what made you decide to become a monk?"

Once more the teacher's smile renewed its brightness, as if each question threw fuel on his fire. "I think a lot about dying," he said.

Suddenly, down here in the four hundred, down here in me, a silent explosion of light. This Buddhist monk with his shaven skull and his strange robes, this exotic flower of a tradition so utterly separate and different from my own, this little man from the opposite side of the planet—I recognized him! He was my brother, he was myself. His eloquence spoke not merely *to* me but *for* me. He knew what I knew but he knew it better. He was what I was but he was it more. His path was my path but he'd gone ahead of me. We'd both thought a lot about dying—Tolstoy said anyone who thinks at all thinks about his own death—but this man had thought about it a lot harder than I had. In stark contrast to me who yearned to be, this man was . . .

"I wonder if you'd mind commenting a bit on the distinction between the Buddhist notion of enlightenment and the Christian notion of salvation?"

. . . alight, afire—that's what he was. While I and most of us smoldered and smoked, spluttered and flickered, this man burned, burned with a bright and steady flame.

I can't say whether or not the roshi offered any comment on the distinction between the notions, Christian and Buddhist. If he did I missed it. I was too busy ratifying the pact I had just made with myself. To begin meditation practice, starting today. On a trial basis only . . . for a minimum of thirty years.

To Share

Eternal Father of my soul, let my first thought today be of Thee, let my first impulse be to worship Thee, let my first speech be Thy name, let my first action be to kneel before Thee in prayer.

For Thy perfect wisdom and perfect goodness:
For the love wherewith Thou lovest humankind:
For the love wherewith Thou lovest me:
For the great and mysterious opportunity of my life:
For the indwelling of Thy Spirit in my heart:
For the sevenfold gifts of Thy Spirit:
I praise and worship Thee, O Lord.

Yet let me not, when this morning prayer is said, think my worship ended and spend the day in forgetfulness of Thee. Rather from these moments of quietness, let light go forth, and joy, and power, that will remain with me through all the hours of the day;

Keeping me chaste in thought:
Keeping me faithful and diligent in my work:
Keeping me humble in my estimation of myself:
Keeping me honorable and generous in my dealings with others:
Keeping me loyal to every hallowed memory of the past:
Keeping me mindful of my eternal destiny as a child of Thine.

O, God, who hast been the Refuge of my parents through many generations, be my Refuge today in every time and circumstance of need. Be my Guide through all that is dark and doubtful. Be my Guard against all that threatens my spirit's welfare. Be my strength in time of testing. Gladden my heart with Thy peace; through Jesus Christ my lord. Amen.

Sent to us by J. Hartford of Honolulu, Hawaii. If you would like to share your favorite prayer, or one you have written, with the readers of F.I.P., *please send it typed and double spaced to The Editor,* Fellowship In Prayer, *291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.*

Using the *I Ching* for Spiritual Development

CAROL K. ANTHONY

Skepticism turned into awe when the author was persuaded to consult the I Ching, *which counseled her to "bring her heart to a standstill." Here was precisely the guidance she needed to undertake a centering process and try a new approach to problems and stress.*

The *I Ching* is a series of hexagrams derived from an ancient Chinese oracle. It came into my hands at perhaps the only time in my life that I would have been open to it—a time of crisis. Even so I approached it cautiously, not allowing the small crack in my "cosmic egg" to enlarge. I had a Missouri attitude: "show me." Nevertheless, on consulting it I discovered it fed some wellspring in my nature that had not been touched in years.

Thinking of myself as having a scientific attitude I was shocked that through the "chance" means of consulting it (throwing coins) I repeatedly got a particular hexagram, #52, *Keeping Still*. This hexagram counseled me to "bring the thinking of the heart to a standstill." Gradually I realized this was referring to my emotions which were demanding I "do something" about the problems which were bothering me. I also began to understand it meant me to meditate. As soon as I understood this, I began to get suggestions on how to meditate. In time I learned a particular *I Ching* form of meditation.

I was impressed how it seemed to repeat the same messages until I understood what *it was trying to say*. The more I used it, the more I had the impression I was talking to someone. This someone had a particular point of view and way of getting me to understand. It was uncanny.

I was also to realize that regardless of any question I might ask, it would zero in on the other, deeper question which most concerned me. While I was occasionally frustrated it would not address questions of mere curiosity, I was otherwise rewarded with an effective approach to dealing with the needs of the moment. It seemed the *I Ching* would not allow me to move deeply into the past, or far off into the future; it kept me pinned down to the Now. I was also to learn that it is the way of the

Carol Anthony, an expert on the uses of the I Ching *for meditation and self-examination, is a writer and publisher in Stow, Massachusetts. She has written an outstanding book on the* I Ching.

I Ching to proceed only in a step-by-step manner; it never skips steps, however much we may want it to.

The *I Ching* made me differentiate between the essential and the superficial; it made me examine questions of vanity, ask whether the rights

and privileges I had assumed were correct; it made me aware that my self-image and ego were my real enemies. In time I was to realize that in consulting the *I Ching* about my problems, my problems became the vehicles by which it taught me to approach human relationships. I learned that merely by correcting my attitude, virtually any problem became solvable. Formerly I did not follow the good because I could not see how the good could be made to work in the practical world. The *I Ching* taught me practical ways of following the good, and it made me realize that following and doing good for no other reason than because it is good, made me happy and at peace with myself.

This, then, is my experience of self-examination by way of the *I Ching*. I discovered many, many errors in my attitude, errors I was able to shed through seeing them as based on half-truths. To see is to be free. The *I Ching* also gave me practical techniques to deal with my problems. For example, it taught me to "disperse" anger, to "sacrifice" alienation, to "let go," to "give space," to "suspend disbelief" rather than give up on people. With practical techniques discipline becomes easy. For example, while anger may be justified, its presence obstructs a higher view of things, and we only become the slaves of our anger. The *I Ching* counsels us to sacrifice anger. The image of sacrificing gives one a practical image of letting go of anger. Sacrificing all things extraneous to our pure nature is the way of the *I Ching*.

The *I Ching*, then, is a spiritual path which leads us to connect with our deeper, purer, essential self. By teaching us to be true to this essential self we put ourself in harmony with the Cosmos as a whole, which always acts to bless and further us. What is this active, ongoing Cosmos but the ongoing activity of God, the Higher Power. The *I Ching* ultimately leads one to a vivid awareness of God as with us here and now rather than as a remote being we will know more about after death. Ultimately it dawns on one that he (she, or it) who teaches through the *I Ching*, while strict in principles, reserved when we are indifferent, helpful when we are receptive and open, modest and kind in tone, patient beyond words with our stubborn egotism, can only be God! We gradually realize that a God which is remote, indifferent, monolithic, jealous, vindictive, or perhaps a trickster out to get us, is entirely wrong; in this view we have only attributed to God our own inferior characteristics.

Once, in an *I Ching* study group, someone asked if the *I Ching* was a religion. My response was, as usual, to ask it. Its reply was, "No, it was simply a study of the truths of life."

LISA BOSCANE

"Presence"

that evening and it was not yet night, I put my footsteps
in your footsteps;
the olive tree was attentive to the october sky, and the sea,
out there, like yesterday,
you aroused within me the need for your face incarnating
the eternal.

What is my predilection for the light of dawn?
in the distance the hills dance like waves, I see
rivers, snows and sands, stars from the confines of
darkness.
My body is made of atoms of light when the solar
manna is raised between the hands of the Church.

oh God, liberate the dawn in me.

"Song Of The Hills"

We no longer have time to contemplate the sea,
We no longer have time to sing of the stars.
Suns have set
In the depths of our darkness.

The time for us to look at childhood is lost,
The time for us to feel the dawn is lost
Our households have offended
The wheatfields and hills.

From the bare hands of someone in prayer hope bursts forth,
From the bare hands of someone in prayer light has filtered.
Here you are, Holy People,
Numerous as the sands.

These extraordinary poems were written by Lisa Boscane, an esteemed member of the Poor Clare community in Nice, France, and were translated by Mary McCarthy, RSM, a French professor at Georgian Court College in New Jersey.

God gives back breath to dehydrated humans,
God gives back the river to arid mountains.
From age to age, the Fountainhead
In the hills springs up.

"Chant Litanique"

You penetrate my heart of darkness with your light.
you are bounding river,
you are vast and tender sea
you are fountainhead,
you are my limpid water with roots buried
in the darkness of tenderness, you are birth within me.
you are darkness and tenderness,
you are ardent fountainhead,
you are liquid flame,
you are original birth,
you are eternal spurt,
you penetrate me with darkness and with light.

"Prayer"

give to your servant faithful tenderness in times of absence and
long-drawn-out uncertainty,
allow her to walk along unfamiliar paths so that
new lanes will be opened in her heart,
and she will become a land of benedictions;
give to your servant the humble indulgence and patience of
the earth plowed for a long time before the promise of fruit,
for our fathers have told us the marvels that you performed
in olden days,
for the most pure chant of Woman repeats from age to age Your
Mercy for Israel the people of your sons.

GOPI KRISHNA

In a last letter to his devoted disciples Karen A. Jones and G. Philippe Menos, who submitted the following article to us, the author wrote: "Humanity has to change from the present ego-centered ways of life to a wider existence, more in touch with the spiritual realities and the imperceptible powers of creation." The meditation experience described below, which took place in 1937 when Krishna was 34, marked the beginning of his own deep "change" and an odyssey of global proportions in service to humanity's spiritual and ethical development.

One morning during Christmas of 1937 I sat cross-legged in a small room in a little house on the outskirts of the town of Jammu in northern India. I was meditating with my face towards the window on the east through which the first grey streaks of the slowly brightening dawn fell into the room. Long practice had accustomed me to sit in the same posture for hours at a time without the least discomfort, and I sat breathing slowly and rhythmically, contemplating an imaginary lotus in full bloom, radiating light.

My whole being was so engrossed in the contemplation of the lotus that for several minutes at a time I lost touch with my surroundings. During such intervals I used to feel as if I were poised in mid-air, without any feeling of a body around me. This experience has happened to many people who practise meditation but what followed on that fateful morning, changed the whole course of my life.

I suddenly felt a strange sensation below the base of the spine, while I sat cross-legged on a folded blanket spread on the floor. The sensation was so extraordinary and pleasing that my attention was forcibly drawn towards it. The moment my attention was thus unexpectedly drawn from the point on which it was focused, the sensation ceased. Thinking it to be a trick played by my imagination, I dismissed the matter and brought my attention back to the point from which it had wandered. Again I fixed it on the lotus, and as the image grew clear and distinct at the top of my head, again the sensation occurred. This time I tried to maintain the fixity of my attention and succeeded for a few seconds, but

Gopi Krishna, born in Kashmir, taught a "Law of Evolution," suggesting that principles governing spiritual growth are manifest biologically in the evolution of the brain and nervous system. Among his many books are The Way to Self-Knowledge *and* The Wonder of the Brain, *recently sent to us by Gene Kieffer.*

I did not feel I was the same man I had been but a few days before. Little did I realize that from that day onward I was never to be my old normal self again, that I had unwittingly and without preparation or even adequate knowledge of it roused to activity the most wonderful power in humankind, that I had stepped unknowingly upon the key to a guarded secret of the ancients.

the sensation extending upwards grew so intense that in spite of myself my mind went towards it, and at that very moment it again disappeared. I was now convinced that something unusual had happened.

I had read glowing accounts of great benefits resulting from concentration, and of the miraculous powers acquired by yogis through such exercises. My heart began to beat wildly, and I found it difficult to bring my attention to the required degree of fixity. After a while I grew composed and was soon as deep in meditation as before. When completely immersed I again experienced the sensation, but this time, instead of allowing my mind to leave the point where I had fixed it, I maintained a rigidity of attention throughout. The sensation again extended upwards, growing in intensity, and I felt myself wavering; but with a great effort I kept my attention centered round the lotus. Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord.

Entirely unprepared for such a development, I was completely taken by surprise; but regaining self-control instantaneously, I remained sitting in the same posture, keeping my mind on the point of concentration. The illumination grew brighter and brighter; I felt myself entirely enveloped in a halo of light. It is impossible to describe the experience accurately. I felt the point of consciousness that was myself growing wider, surrounded by waves of light. It grew wider and wider. I was now all consciousness, without any feeling coming from the senses, immersed in a sea of light. I was no longer myself, or to be more accurate, no longer as I knew myself to be, a small point of awareness confined in a body, but instead was a vast circle of consciousness in which the body was but a point, bathed in light and in a state of exultation and happiness impossible to describe.

After some time, the duration of which I could not judge, I felt myself contracting, becoming smaller and smaller, until I again became dimly conscious of the outline of my body, of the noises in the street, and once more became my narrow self in touch with surroundings. When I opened my eyes and looked around, I felt a little dazed and bewildered. The sun had risen and was shining on my face, warm and soothing.

What had happened to me? Was I the victim of a hallucination? Or had I by some strange vagary of fate succeeded in experiencing the Transcendental? Was there, after all, really some truth in the oft-repeated claim of the sages and ascetics that it was possible to apprehend reality in this life if one followed certain rules of conduct and practised meditation? My thoughts were in a daze. I could hardly believe that I had a vision of divinity. There had been an expansion of my own self, my own consciousness, and the transformation had been brought about by the vital current that had started from below the spine and found access to my brain through the backbone. I recalled that I had read long ago in books on Yoga of a certain vital mechanism called Kundalini, connected with the lower end of the spine, which becomes active by means of certain exercises, and when once roused carries the limited human consciousness to transcendental heights, endowing the individual with incredible psychic and mental powers. Had I been lucky enough to find the key to this wonderful mechanism? My mind was in a ferment. I looked at the sun. Could it be that in my condition of extreme concentration I had mistaken it for the effulgent halo that had surrounded me in the superconscious state? I closed my eyes again, allowing the rays of the sun to play upon my face. No, the glow that I could perceive across my closed eyelids was quite different. It was external and had not the splendour. The light I had experienced was internal, an integral part of enlarged consciousness.

I stood up. My legs felt weak and tottered under me. It seemed as if my vitality had been drained out. I slowly walked downstairs. I took my meal in silence and left for work. My appetite was not as keen as usual, and I could not put my thoughts into my work in the office. I was in a state of exhaustion and lassitude, disinclined to talk. After a while, feeling suffocated and ill at ease, I left for a short walk in the street with the idea of finding diversion for my thoughts. My mind reverted again and again to the experience of the morning, trying to recreate in imagination the marvellous phenomenon I had witnessed, but without success. My body,

still felt weak, and I could not walk for long. I walked with a sense of detachment and indifference to my surroundings quite foreign to me. I returned to my desk sooner than I had intended, and passed the remaining hours toying with my pen and papers, unable to compose my thoughts sufficiently to work.

When I returned home in the afternoon I felt no better. I could not bring myself to sit down and read, my usual habit in the evening. I ate supper in silence, without appetite or relish, and retired to bed. Usually I was asleep within minutes of putting my head to the pillow, but this night I felt strangely restless and disturbed. I could not reconcile the exaltation of the morning with the depression that set heavily on me while I tossed from side to side on the bed. At last in the midst of misgivings I fell asleep. I slept fitfully, dreaming strange dreams, and woke up after short intervals in sharp contrast to my usual deep, uninterrupted sleep. After about 3 a.m. sleep refused to come. I sat up in bed for some time. Sleep had not refreshed me. I still felt fatigued and my thoughts lacked clarity. The usual time for my meditation was approaching. I decided to begin earlier so that I would not have the sun on my hands and face and went upstairs to my study. I spread the blanket, and sitting cross-legged as usual, began to meditate.

I could not concentrate with the same intensity as on the previous day, though I tried my best. My thoughts wandered, and instead of being in a state of happy expectancy I felt strangely nervous and uneasy. At last, after repeated efforts, I held my attention at the usual point for some time, waiting for results. Nothing happened and I began to feel doubts about the validity of my previous experience. Pulling myself together, I steadied my wandering thoughts, and fixing my attention on the crown, tried to visualize a lotus in full bloom as was my custom. As soon as I arrived at the usual pitch of mental fixity, I again felt the current moving upward. I did not allow my attention to waver, and again with a rush the stream of effulgent light entered my brain, filling me with power and vitality, and I felt myself expanding in all directions, spreading beyond the boundaries of flesh, entirely absorbed in the contemplation of a brilliant conscious glow, one with it and yet not entirely merged in it. The condition lasted for a shorter time than it had yesterday. When I came back to normal, I felt my heart thumping wildly. It seemed as if a scorching blast of air had passed through my body. The feeling of exhaustion and weariness was more pronounced than it had been yesterday.

Tom Dunham

I rested for some time to recover my strength and poise. It was still dark. I had now no doubts the experience was real and the sun had nothing to do with the internal lustre I saw. But, why did I feel uneasy and depressed? Instead of feeling exceedingly happy at my luck and blessing my stars, why had despondency overtaken me? I felt as if I were in imminent danger of something beyond my understanding and power, something intangible and mysterious, which I could neither grasp nor analyse. A heavy cloud of depression and gloom seemed to hang round me, rising from my own depths without relation to external circumstances, I did not feel I was the same man I had been but a few days before, on account of the inexplicable change. Little did I realize that from that day onward I was never to be my old normal self again, that I had unwittingly and without preparation or even adequate knowledge of it roused to activity a most wonderful power, that I had stepped unknowingly upon a key to a guarded secret of the ancients. Little did I realize that from that day onward my life would belong to humanity not myself.

A Buddhist Approach to Bondage and Suffering

LILY DE SILVA

The Buddhist texts repeatedly describe humanity as being bound and fettered to suffering. One *sutta* employs a simple simile to illustrate the manner in which we are fettered to samsaric life. According to this simile a black bull and white bull are tied together with a rope. In this situation it cannot be said that the white bull is a fetter to the black bull, or that the black bull is a fetter to the white bull. Actually it is the rope with which the two are tied together that constitutes the fetter. Similarly the external world is not a fetter to humankind nor is humankind a fetter to the external world. It is the desire for pleasure with which we are bound to the external world that forms the fetter. Desire is a very strong chain to the external world and thereby to the ever recurring cycle of births and deaths. This strong fetter has six strands emerging from the six sense faculties, namely, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mental faculty.

The Pali word for sense faculty is *indriya*, a very interesting word which reveals much about our human situation. *Indra* means lord or king, and the sense faculties are called *Indriyas* because they dominate us so much. They act as our lords or masters and we slavishly obey them. The eye wishes to see pleasant forms, the ear wishes to hear pleasant sounds, the nose to smell pleasant smells, the tongue to enjoy pleasant tastes, and the body to feel pleasant tactile objects. The mental faculty, which unifies all other sense faculties, gets terribly disturbed as it is dragged in different directions by the different sense stimuli, while it has to deal with its own share of agitation in the form of hopes, memories, and imaginations. The *Chappanaka Sutta* of the Samutta Nikaya illustrates the struggle. Six animals having different habits and diverse fields of action are tied together in one knot by a strong rope. The six animals are a crocodile who tries to run to the water, a bird who tries to fly in the air, a dog who tries to run to a village, a fox who tries to flee to a cemetery, a monkey who tries to go to the forest, and a snake who tries to creep into an anthill. These six animals are constantly struggling to reach

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their respective habitats. Similarly, the six senses are constantly seeking gratification in their own spheres, and the man who has no control over his sense faculties becomes terribly confused.

Through our sense we are chained to sense stimuli. We are chained to pleasant sense stimuli by way of greed. We love to see pleasant objects and we spend a great deal of time, energy, and money in our endeavour to procure as many pleasant objects as possible. We love to hear pleasant words; if someone speaks in praise of us once we will often recall it with pleasure and be attached to that pleasure. We love to eat tasty food. Even when rich food is detrimental to our health, we sometimes behead ourselves with our tongue. The plight of modern man can be illustrated by the traditional simile of the ant fallen in the pot of honey, bogged down and drowning in the very pleasures he is trying to enjoy.

Just as we become fettered by greed, so we also get trapped by dislike or hatred. Our aversion is aroused by unpleasant sense stimuli. The stronger the aversion, the more tenaciously we become fettered to the unpleasant object. If someone abuses us in front of a gathering, we would indeed get very angry with the abuser. This incident would come to our mind often and each time it came up we would experience anger. When we recall the abuse over and over and inject negative emotions of anger and hatred into this memory, we should know that a fetter has been formed.

By greed and hatred, our freedom of activity is limited. We become like an animal tethered to a post by a rope. Here egoism is like the post, as we are all tied to the idea of self or "I." The rope stands for desire or aversion, for the stronger the idea of self, the more selfish we become, and the more selfish we become, the stronger grow the desires, likes, and dislikes. So it goes on in a vicious circle. When the rope of desire is strong, the rope itself becomes short, restricting our freedom of activity proportionally. The person with a very strong sense of ego is like the animal who is smothered by the tightness and the shortness of the rope. The nature of this desire-rope is such that when likes and dislikes are weak, the rope itself is not only weakened but also lengthened, giving the human animal greater freedom of activity. Positive emotions such as love and compassion emerge, expanding our scope of freedom. The entire message of the Dhamma can be summarized as a method of rescuing human beings from the trammels of egocentricity, negative emotion, and ignorance, and granting them complete and unlimited freedom. It is like cutting the rope and uprooting the post to which the animal is tied.

Paul M. Schrock

The *suttas* also speak of another human tendency with regard to sense pleasure: dwelling on past sensual pleasures while neglecting to enjoy present pleasures. The past sense objects have already passed away and changed, but we become attached to our memories of them and thus experience anguish. Another trap we fall into because of our enjoyment of sense objects is the generation of the three types of conceit. When we think we have a greater share of sensual pleasures than others, we develop a superiority complex; by considering ourselves equal to others, we develop the equality complex; and by thinking ourselves less fortunate than others in the enjoyment of sense pleasures, we develop the inferiority complex. Thus, by using the measuring rod of sense pleasures to quantify status, we become more and more self-centered and suffer the consequences of all possible complexes. Therefore the Buddha calls sense pleasures the "snare of Mara," the Evil One.

When the sense faculties are unrestrained, the mind gets corrupted, wallowing in the enjoyment of sense objects. Such a corrupt mind does

not find *pamojja*, delight in those higher noble pursuits which elevate the mind.

When this *pamojja*, or spiritual delight is absent, pious joy (*piti*) is also absent. When pious joy is missing there is no *passaddhi*, physical and mental relaxation. One who is not relaxed lives in tension, frustration, and misery. This is what is called in Pali *dukkha*, "suffering." Thus suffering is traced to non-restraint in the sense faculties.

The *Salayatana Samyutta* traces the origin of the world to sense experience. Depending on the sense faculties and sense objects there arises sense consciousness. The convergence of these three factors—sense faculties, sense objects, and sense consciousness—is called contact. Contact generates feelings. In other words, if the object is delightful we experience pleasure in making contact with it. Feelings give rise to craving as we tend to desire more and more of the pleasant feelings. Craving generates clinging, when we try to possess the objects we crave for. Clinging nurtures the growth of personality factors, which in turn causes birth. Birth brings in its wake all the ills of old age, death, grief, lamentation. This is called the arising of the world. Thus we construct our own private worlds through the instrumentality of our sense faculties.

All this material goes to show that we are trapped to *samsara* through the domination of our senses. If we allow them free rein, we allow them to control us. Bondage and suffering are proportionate to the extent that we allow our sense faculties to dominate us. If we desire freedom and happiness, we have to subjugate the senses and make them our servants.

Dying: the Final Step in Spiritual Development

JANE HUGGINS

In the Middle Ages, the author writes, "pilgrims, travelers, and the dying were housed together" in hospices because "they were all on a journey and in need of a place to stop for comfort." Pleading for our own society to bring death out of hiding and into life where it belongs, she omits discussion of the afterlife mystery to focus on compassion for and community with the dying.

O dark dark dark. They all
go into the dark. The vacant
interstellar spaces, the vacant
into the vacant.

Death is not a popular topic. Our current American perspective certainly emphasizes abolishment of it from our thinking. One person writes, "In our society old age, sickness, and death are, as far as possible, banished from our thoughts. Death is an affront to progressive thinkers . . . Perfect health is the ideal. Death and the related states of sickness and old age are denied." Lewis Thomas has said, "There are 3 billion of us on the earth and all 3 billion must be dead, on a schedule, within this lifetime. Over 50 million of us die each year, and most takes place in relative secrecy.

Denial of death in the face of its immensity is not only ludicrous, but causes suffering. "Most fight death as they fought life, struggling for a foothold, for some control over the incessant flow of change that exemplifies this plane of existence. Few die in wholeness. Most live a life of partiality and confusion." In view of this suffering, and the *need* of our society to reintegrate death into its *life* perspective, we must develop a more humane perspective.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross has initiated work toward this end by focusing on the dying process and emphasizing that the dying have much to teach family, caregivers, and community surrounding them. Her initial explorations in this area led to a description of stages through which dying people proceed (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance).

Jane Huggins, who calls herself a "fledgling writer," volunteers in a hospice program. She finds work with the dying to be enlightening, "a space for finding what it is that human beings share."

This has made death and the dying individual somewhat less mysterious and hence less frightening.

The hospice movement, begun in part as a result of Kübler-Ross's efforts, embodies the idea that dying and the dying process are of value. Hospices originated in the medieval period and the view was held that life was not separate from dying. Pilgrims, travelers, and the dying were housed together. They were all considered on a journey and in need of a place to stop for comfort. The dying were valued as individuals and as beings whose existence was moving onto a higher plane. Today, volunteers involved in counseling the dying and bereaved find it an enriching experience. They, more often than not, come away with a greater understanding of themselves.

Hospice care is, by definition, palliative, acknowledging the reality of the patient's status as not requiring heroic measures. Hence the approach is one of providing succor appropriate to the individual's state of being.

Buddhist tradition suggests that we become enlightened by letting go of attachments. Buddhist wisdom also maintains that letting go is dying, but dying into the heart, which is love. As we do this, we become more in touch with what is really "there." As we become more "knowing" our approach to death becomes authentic. In essence, we know what is there.

Hospices and the hospice movement tend to embody "knowing what is there." Sandol Stoddard illustrates this with the following tableau. A man has gone wandering in the streets of a town unknown to him. He suddenly feels afraid and faint as strange villagers surround him. He is "rescued" by a young woman from a hospice and after he has rested, the following conversation ensues between the two:

"Is this a hospice?" he asks.
"Yes," she answers, smiling, "It is."
"You are very good to me," he says. "I don't know that I belong here, however. I am not really sick, you see. I was only lost for the moment, and a little confused."
"Yes," she says. "I know. You have come on a long journey. Now you are safe."
"But I am not like that poor old fellow there," he says lowering his voice. "I mean, I can see that he is not long for this world, but I am all right—I am not dying."
"Not dying?" Her smile has a hint of mischief in it now.
"Not dying! Well, that is strange indeed. Were you not born of woman, sir? I was."

Paul M. Schrock

Pretentions about living and our "difference" from those dying are exposed in just such settings where what is there is known.

The values espoused by the hospice movement have been those of community, compassion, dignity, and self-determination. These values have been considered countercultural and in opposition to our current interpretation of medical care. Their surfacing and subsequent endorsement reflect a feeling on the part of many that something has been lost or is missing in our emphasis on individualism. This theme, elaborated in *Habits of the Heart* by Robert Bellah, suggests that Americans have lost community, having no longer an economic structure that supports it. Our inability to describe community reflects our loss of communication. This loss has resulted in relegation of community to a "second language" subordinate to the "first language" of individualism.

Death, of course, is the ultimate threat to individualism, reflecting more a stage of individuation, than of individualism, which is precisely

why concepts of community are found surrounding it. Death is a stage of life through which everyone passes—it is bigger than the individual. Because of this, it requires the larger context of community—the experience of shared being, where each person exists in "mutuality" with the person dying and thus validates a larger perspective of death. We must learn to reaffirm death as a *beautiful* experience to be *shared*, a fact most people know, but have not time or room for in their present way of thinking.

Knowing that what is there is beautiful seems to be what American culture has "forgotten" or lost about death, and it seems to be missed, as are the second languages of family, tradition, and community. That we miss these aspects of ourselves seems to imply that they are seeking stronger integration into our current way of being. Societies in general tend to be engaged in a continual integration of "old"/"new" values and I believe it is time for allowance/revalidation of older, more broadly-based notions of dying (older only in the sense that they are not what is currently in vogue). I believe such revalidation would do much toward restoring integration to our culture and wholeness to our selves. We would be allowing ourselves to "know what is there" in dying and to love it.

To date, primarily hospices have been a focus for community and broader approaches to death. Hopefully this focus will expand as we become more cognizant of our need to bring death back into life and love the dying as we love the living.

Death is the final step in our spiritual development. Let us help one another to take this great step that brings our journey to completion.

Thesis About Death

WILLIAM WALTER DE BOLT

Death approaches, never a period
bringing the sentence of life to a
close
like the spilling of a moment,
or the dissolution of an hour.

Death, time's comma, visits
and punctuates, and labors to
convince
of more to follow.

Song Of Myself

JULIE R. LEEGWATER-KIM

I have been asked often
which nese I am
Japanese?
or Chinese?
foolish asker,
how mistaken you are.
Two continents claim my genes
the homes of Van Gogh
and Kyung Wha Chung
are my own
I live at the confluence of the
Danube and the Yangtze
My blood runs proudly in the
Taedong and Rhine
windmills and pagodas
dikes and water paddies
Calvinism and Buddhism
color my past
My ancestors
Fished along the shores of the
Baltic and Yellow Seas
in straw hats and wooden shoes,
Founded ancient dynasties,
Invented windmills
My grandfathers' Fathers
were yangban
and farmers
My Grandfathers
were politicians and theologians
They hid Jews
and were shot by Communists
I am a melange of
European and Asian,
and you ask me
which nese am I.

Julie Kim, a Presidential Scholar, National Merit Finalist, and professional violinist, graduated from Stuart Country Day School in Princeton, NJ, and is a freshman at Princeton University.

SEEKING THE HEART OF WISDOM: THE PATH OF INSIGHT MEDITATION
by Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield, Shambhala, Boston, 1987, 195 pages, paper, $10.95.

The authors gave world-wide vipassana meditation retreats for many years before producing the wonderful blend of teachings and practice contained in this book. Rooted primarily in Thai and Burmese Buddhism, the authors' concern wanders through fields like compassion, liberation, and mindfulness, each chapter concluding with one or more exercises to strengthen the spiritual quality discussed. For example, they write about learning to serve others: "Imagine yourself five years from now as you would most like to be . . . What is the contribution you've made to the world that brings your heart the greatest satisfaction? To make this contribution, what unworthiness would you have to relinquish?" This fine book is as good for beginners as for those in need of new encouragement along the way.

THE DYNAMICS OF HOPE
by Ira Progoff, Dialogue House Library, New York, 1987, 269 pages, paper, $9.95.

A superb book from the founder of the Intensive Journal method of spiritual growth. Progoff explores the alternation of anxiety and hope throughout the seven basic stages of the human lifecycle (extending from childhood through early adulthood and mid-life to maturity). Building on the teachings of C. G. Jung, with whom he studied, Progoff shows how the individual's life is always pressing toward new development and higher meaning.

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY FOR THE EIGHTIES
by Claire E. Lowery (ed.), 1983, Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, Dubuque, Iowa, paperback.

The book is one of the results of a symposium that wanted to depict the varied dimensions of an authentic Christian spirituality. Lowery writes in her introduction that she hopes the book will help readers to identify

in their own contemporary lives the Spirit's way, and its four essays succeed admirably in doing just that. The personal, interpersonal, social, political, and ecumenical aspects of a broad spirituality of the eighties are illuminated by and for both Catholics and Protestants, but the book contains valuable thoughts for non-Christians, too.

PATH THROUGH SCRIPTURE: FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION
by Mark Link, S.J., 1987, Tabor Publishing, Valencia, California, paperback.

Mark Link describes his work best himself: "This book grew out of three challenges. The first came from a friend who said, 'tell the story of the Bible in a single book. There's no book like this available for the average person.' The second challenge came from a teacher who said, 'include in that book the best activities, discussion topics, and prayer exercises you've gleaned in twenty years of teaching.' The third challenge came from a businessman who said, 'write that book in nontechnical language. Use lots of examples and stories.' " The author has met each challenge remarkably well.

PRAYING THE PSALMS
by J. Barrie Shepherd, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1987, paper, $8.95.

Well-known for devotional books like *Diary of Daily Prayer*, J. Barrie Shepherd once again echoes the spirit and beauty of the Scriptures. The book contains a month of meditations, each on a different psalm, each selected for its universal appeal and relevance to daily life. The author hopes that the reader will not only read and pray, but feel moved to write his or her own meditations, poems, or notes. The Bible's timeless "songs of the spirit" offer an ideal way to begin the day, and Shepherd's reflections enhance their value as spiritual and psychological nourishment. There is an unfortunate insensitivity, however, in the author's expressed unwillingness to use inclusive language.

Jim Auer, What's Right?: A Teenager's Guide to Christian Living, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1987, 112 pages, paperback.

Jim Auer, 10 Good Reasons To Be A Catholic: A Teenager's Guide To The Church, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1987, 64 pages, paperback.

Robert Augros/George Stanciu, The New Biology: Discovering The Wisdom In Nature, Boston & London: New Science Library Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1987, 274 pages, paperback, $22.50.

James J. Bacik, The Gracious Mystery: Finding God in Ordinary Experiences, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1987, 141 pages, paperback.

Trevor Barnes, Terry Waite: Man With A Mission, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987, 141 pages, paperback.

Baha'i Writings: Prayers and Thoughts for Peace, London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1986, 60 pages, paperback.

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David Barratt, C. S. Lewis and His World, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1987, 46 pages, paperback.

Daniel Bassuk, Abraham Lincoln and the Quakers, Dexter, MI: Pendle Hill Publications, 1987, 32 pages, paperback.

Deidre Bobgan, Lord of The Dance, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1987, 204 pages, paperback.

Marilyn Brokamp, O.S.F., Prayer Times: For Intermediate Grades, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1987, 54 pages, paperback, $4.95.

Paul Brunton, Healing of the Self: Using The Forces of Life, The Negatives: Understanding The Powers of Darkness, New York, NY: Larson Publications, 1987, 176 pages, paperback.

Father John Catoir/Joseph R. Thomas, Three Minutes A Day, New York, NY: The Christophers, 1983, 356 pages, paperback.

Maureen Conroy, R.S.M., Growing In Love & Freedom: Personal Experience of Counseling and Spiritual Direction, Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1987, 83 pages, paperback, $6.95.

Vernie Dale, Under One Roof: Good News For Families, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1987, 48 pages, paperback, $1.50.

Frank Deford, Alex: The Life of A Child, Baltimore, MA: Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, 1987, 142 pages, paperback.

Dr. James C. Dobson, Love for a Lifetime: Building a Marriage That Will Go the Distance, Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1987, 125 pages, hardcover.

Eknath Easwaran, The Bhagavad Gita, Petaluma, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1985, 237 pages, paperback.

Melvin H. Freedman/Samuel Silver, How To Enjoy This Moment, New York, NY: Entrepreneurs Productions, 1982, 192 pages, paperback, $8.95.

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Edwin V. Hayden, Beloved Sufferer, Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1987, 123 pages, paperback.

Meinrad Craighead, The Mother's Songs: Images of God The Mother, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986, 79 pages, paperback, $9.95.

Anthony E. Gilles, The People of Anguish: The Story behind the Reformation, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1987, 194 pages, paperback, $7.95.

John M. Hamrogue, C.SS.R., Sex & Marriage: A Catholic Perspective, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1987, 79 pages, paperback, $2.95.

Ann Johnson, Miryam of Judah: Witness in Truth & Tradition, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987, 141 pages, paperback, $5.95.

Alan Kredider, Journey Towards Holiness, A Way of Living for God's Nation, Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1987, 304 pages, paperback, $9.95.

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Lotus Prayer Book, Buckingham, VA: Integral Yoga Publications, 1986, 210 pages, paperback, $9.95.

Karen Burton Mains, With My Whole Heart: Disciplines for Strengthening the Inner Life, Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1987, 160 pages, paperback.

Henry Margenau, The Miracle of Existence, New York, NY: Random House, 1987, 143 pages, paperback, $9.95.

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Campbell McAlpine, Alone with God: A Manual of Biblical Meditation, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1981, 184 pages, paperback.

Joseph T. McGloin, S.J., Listen Lord, Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1987, 115 pages, paperback, $7.95.

William F. McKee, C.SS.R., Listen With Your Heart: Five-Minute Meditations, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1987, 63 pages, paperback, $1.95.

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Miriam Murphy, Prayer In Action: A Growth Experience, Nashville, TN: The Parthenon Press, 1979, 174 pages, paperback.

Andrew Murray, The Believer's School of Prayer, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1982, 201 pages, paperback.

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Henri J.M. Nouwen, Behold The Beauty of The Lord: Praying with Icons, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987, 80 pages, paperback, $7.95.

Louis Gifford Parkhurst (ed.), Charles G. Finney's Answers to Prayer, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1983, 122 pages, paperback.

M. Basil Pennington O.C.S.O., Thomas Merton Brother Monk: The Quest for True Freedom, San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987, 205 pages, paperback, $15.95.

Michael Francis Pennock, The Ways of Prayer, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987, 141 pages, paperback, $4.95.

Ira Progoff, The Dynamics of Hope: Perspectives of Progress in Anxiety and Creativity, Imagery and Dreams, New York, NY: Dialogue House Association, 1985, 269 pages, paperback.

Ralph F. Ranieri, The Blended Family: A Guide for Stepparents, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1987, 47 pages, paperback, $1.50.

Leonard Ravenhill (ed.), A Treasury of Prayer, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1981, 192 pages, paperback.

P. H. Raynis, Saving The World from Your Home: What One Person Can Do, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1987, 113 pages, paperback, $5.95.

Rosalind Rinker, Prayer: Conversing With God, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959, 115 pages, paperback.

Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M. Would You Like To Be Anointed? Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1987, 40 pages, paperback, $2.95.

Richard Rohr/Joseph Martos, The Great Themes of Scripture, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1987, 131 pages, paperback, $5.95.

Brother Roger, Awakened from Within, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1987, 127 pages, paperback, $12.95.

Sy Safransky (ed.), A Bell Ringing In The Empty Sky: The Best Of The Sun, San Diego, CA. 1987, 492 pages, paperback, $12.95.

Susan Saint Sing, Living with Sickness: A Struggle Toward Meaning, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1986, 86 pages, paperback, $4.50.

Abraham Schmitt, Turn Again To Life: Growing Through Grief, Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987, 136 pages, paperback, $8.95.

J. Barrie Shepherd, Praying the Psalms: Daily Meditations on Cherished Psalms, Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1987, 129 pages, paperback, $8.95.

Larry D. Shinn, The Dark Lord: Cult Images and the Hare Krishnas in America, Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1987, 204 pages, paperback, $16.95.

Reverend Eamon Tobin, Help for Making Difficult Decisions, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1987, 31 pages, paperback, $1.50.

Ann Weems, Kneeling In Bethlehem, Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1987, 90 pages, paperback, $7.95.

Miriam Therese Winter, Woman Prayer Woman Song, Bloomington, IN: Meyer Stone Books, 1987, 254 pages, paperback, $14.95.

We are happy to report that after a long search a permanent home for the Fellowship has been found, a spacious house with a sunny meeting room, a meditation room, rooms for offices and an eventual lending library. Behind the house tall green trees foster the contemplative attitude for which our Organization stands.

A dedication service and celebration will take place in the near future when it is hoped that Fellowship In Prayer's Co-founder, Miss Kathryn G. Brown, will attend and reminisce with us about the 37 years since the Fellowship's founding "for a world united in prayer."

The house will provide a setting for a number of interpersonal programs designed by Kim Hollingsworth to bring people together in a prayerful and thoughtful atmosphere. Among the programs are a lecture series featuring speakers of diverse religious traditions and conferences on aspects of the spiritual life. Kim also conducts the Kathryn G. Brown Awards Program, which invites college students to submit essays on the topic, "What My Faith and Practice Mean to Me." This specific project is intended to give students an opportunity to reflect on the spiritual dimension of life for their own benefit and for that of our readers. Kim has recently written, "These programs are initial ways to nurture and encourage us to answer God's call, 'I have a word which can be spoken in you.' "

Kim is available for speaking engagements and participation in events like workshops and conferences in your area. Please contact her at 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton NJ 08542. The Editor is deeply grateful for the invitations extended to her and regrets that she has very little time for travel. Occasional trips are a possibility, however.

As part of Fellowship In Prayer's expansion, we are appointing a number of Advisers and Contributing Editors from the United States and other countries who will represent a large variety of religions and spiritual perspectives.

For the many people who have requested information about our photographer, Tom Dunham lives in Robbinsville, NJ. He is unable to provide reproductions of *Fellowship In Prayer* photographs, but is available for commercial work.

To those of you who have taken the trouble to write us to suggest that the word "fellowship" is sexist and ought to be replaced by a more inclusive word, we are happy to report that "fellowship" comes from the Middle English word *felowe* meaning companionship. It thus includes men and women equally.

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Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1200 words, should be typed, double spaced, and sent to The Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. Please include a biography of no more than five lines.

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